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ABSTRACT

A plan for staff development was evolved at Williamsport Area Community College (Pennsylvania), a primarily vocational-technical school. Program objectives were established and questionnaires constructed to survey needs of trustees, professional, and classified staff. A five-part recommendation resulted that included (1) the placement of responsibility for directing staff development; (2) upgrading skills and instructional techniques through volunteer workshops, industrial training subsidies, new teacher apprenticeships, trustee retreats, administrative seminars, credential upgrading, and salary credit for non-academic training programs; (3) orientation for new, returning, and part-time staff, with audio-visual orientation for mid-year hires; (4) research, renewal, and self-development activities including summer research and development grants, professional meeting reports to colleagues, informal discussion groups, use of campus recreational facilities, college-chartered travel, a professional library for current articles, and training of audio-tutorial materials facilitators within instructional divisions; and (5) exchange programs of faculty with other Pennsylvania colleges. Plans for classified staff involved orientation, written job descriptions, evaluations, and in-service workshops for updating job skills. (ET)

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Vocational and Staff Development in the Community College:

A Paper Presented at

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at Seven Springs, Pa.

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VOCATIONAL AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

We can boast of the rapid development community colleges have made in the country since their inception in 1901, when Joliet Junior College opened its doors. Arithmetically, there is an average of approximately twenty community colleges for each of the fifty states, or nearly 1000 public community colleges in the United States.

Pennsylvania began to plan and develop its community college system during the early 1960's. The Pennsylvania Community College Act of 1963 (PL 1132, Act 484) provided for the creation, establishment and operation of public community colleges and technical institutes. In 1965, four community colleges officially opened in the Commonwealth. One of the four was the Williamsport Area Community College in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

Unlike the other three institutions, the Williamsport Area Community College (WACC) carried with it a history that extends back to 1941, when the Williamsport Technical Institute was founded. During the first years of the Institute, intensive training was provided for defense industries. The Institute operated twenty-four hours a day. At the same time, the needs of returning veterans were being considered by Institute personnel. Additionally, plans were made in cooperation with local manufacturers to train veterans for civilian jobs.

In September 1965, WACC opened its doors to the first class of community college students. Although the Institute was well equipped to provide vocational training to this "new" student group, there were still many hurdles to be overcome because of the structural change. One of the many problems facing the college was staff development, the subject addressed in this paper.

In order to understand our process of staff development, it will first be necessary to have a brief discussion of two points. Point one deals with our educational structure, and point two addresses who is to be served by our staff development program.

Addressing point one: unlike any other community college in Pennsylvania, WACC provides both secondary and postsecondary education under one administrative body. At the secondary level, the educational offerings are entirely vocational, and thus regulated through the Pennsylvania Department of Instruction. However, at the postsecondary level, WACC is primarily a vocational-technical school, with approximately 90% of the students enrolled in programs designed to provide employable skills. The remaining 10% of the students are enrolled in transfer programs. Thus, these variables add to the complexity of staff development.

Addressing point two: who should be served? It is probably obvious that in most staff development programs, the faculty and administration are going to receive varying amounts of development,

but at Williamsport since we had the grand opportunity to start almost anew, it was decided to attempt the ideal in terms of who should be served by a staff development program. A resultant basic philosophy was established, staff was defined and objectives of the staff development program were outlined. They are as follows:

Philosophy

We believe in the capacity of staff to develop their abilities to the fullest potential. We believe that a staff which performs competently and which finds meaning in its work and life will function together more effectively to benefit the educational program.

Staff as herein used includes all who serve in the College: namely trustees, professional staff and classified staff. Professional staff includes administrators, teaching faculty, counselors and librarians. Classified staff includes secretarial, maintenance and custodial personnel.

Objectives

The objectives of a staff development program are to improve the competencies of those serving the community college by designing formal pre-service and in-service programs. The program shall also allow for individual self improvement, self realization and renewal through participation in conferences, workshops, travel, professional organizations and upgrading of personal credentials through on-going educational pursuits. The need for such a program gained emphasis from the goal setting survey, discussed later.

The current status of staff development and staff suggestions were used as a basis in the formulation of the following guidelines for an effective staff development program:

1. The program shall be developed around the College's mission and the needs of the staff and community. It must be developed as an integral part of the College with full administrative support.
2. The program must have a person or persons who carry prime responsibility for it from planning through evaluation.
3. Funds must be provided for all functions of the program. These funds must be included in the budget.
4. The staff must be allowed time to participate in the program. Release time may be required in some instances; in other instances, programs should be included in the college calendar.
5. Presentations or activities must be properly publicized well in advance.
6. The staff must be motivated to engage in the programs. One suggestion is to integrate participation in staff development programs with monetary remuneration. Another possibility is to include programs as a contractual obligation. For some staff, involvement in programs might be used to determine their candidacy for off-campus training programs subsidized by the College.

7. The program must be continually evaluated to provide direction for future programs.
8. The College's own staff should be used to design, offer, conduct and evaluate programs.

Having defined the basic parameters of staff development, three questionnaires were developed to elicit responses from the respective groups. Group one consisted of professional staff, group two consisted of the classified staff, and group three's questionnaire was designed for the Board of Trustees (WACC's governing body).

Reported below is a summary of the findings of this survey.

Trustees

To establish a data base relevant to staff development for the members of the Board of Trustees, a questionnaire was constructed and administered to this group. The 15 members were asked to respond to a variety of items, including teaching or administrative experience, years on the College Board, identification of trustee constituency, occupation and attitude toward staff development. Eleven trustees returned their questionnaires. The questionnaires reveal the following information: the mean age of this group is 55 years; two individuals possess earned doctorates, one has a law degree, six have Master's degrees, two have baccalaureate degrees and one is a high school graduate; eight of the trustees feel their first responsibility is to the sponsor district, while three

identified their constituency as the students and the College.

Generally, as a group, their reaction to developmental activities for the Board was positive. Furthermore, they view development activities for the staff as a high priority.

Professional Staff

To assess the attitude of the professional staff concerning staff development and their expectations for the future, a questionnaire using the Likert scale (low to high response) was devised. Eight general categories germane to staff development were devised, and respondents noted their feelings on a one-to-four (1-4) scale with 1 = low and 4 = high.

Results of the questionnaire indicate that this group has a favorable attitude toward staff development. The illustration below reveals the responses of the staff to the various categories.

HIGH RESPONSE

1. Curriculum development
2. Innovative teaching techniques
3. Improving community understanding of WACC and knowledge of WACC's resources
4. Defining/establishing cooperative relationships with area institutions, organizations, agencies

LOW RESPONSE

1. Library services
2. Use of computer
3. Cooperative education
4. WACC governance

Degrees of concern having been established, the professional staff were asked through an open-ended question to list special skills/competencies that they might be willing to share with others. A great diversity of knowledge and skill was revealed. Some could, for example, share information on innovative instructional techniques, some, contract systems, some, formulation of behavioral objectives and use of the computer. WACC already has a nucleus for staff development.

Areas of concern receiving low responses are indeed worth analyzing. Library (Learning Resources) Services have for years been located on the fringes of the campus. They are not readily accessible to faculty and students. Statements from individuals from all campus constituencies indicate that this may be the reason for the low response. Cooperative education and the use of the computer are relatively modern educational adjuncts to this College. Staff must be made aware of their potential values. Governance suffered most likely from the history of turmoil and low morale at the institution during the last few years.

Classified Staff

Classified staff also reacted favorably toward development. Seventy-five percent reacted positively to participation in short courses, workshops, or other types of job performance improvement during working hours The willingness exists! It drops somewhat for non-working hours, but the figure still remains high at sixty-six percent. There was also interest in the formation of committees

to develop recommendations for programs and review of personnel policies.

Staff Development Recommendations

To resolve deficiencies and encourage the growth of a strong staff development program at WACC, the following recommendations were offered.

Responsibility/Primary

Primary responsibility for professional staff development should become part of the job descriptions of the Deans of Post-secondary and Secondary Instructional and Student Services. The Director of Personnel should assume primary responsibility for the classified staff.

Responsibility/Secondary

Secondary responsibility should be assumed by the Staff Development Committee and the Assistant to the President for Research and Development. The Staff Development Committee can present program proposals and assist in the planning, implementation and evaluation process.

Continuing Current Activities

It is recommended that current provisions for staff development, either by Board policy or contract (WACC is under contract in affiliation with Pennsylvania State Education Association) be continued.

The College President should designate responsibility for programs for trustees and administration.

UPGRADING SKILLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES

Volunteer Workshops

As questionnaire response identified several areas in which the staff expressed interest, the following approach to in-service work allows for a broad range of topics. A team of full time "internal consultants" selected by the deans should work with those assigned responsibility for staff development to design modular workshops for the staff. This project should be organized during a summer and the internal consultants should be compensated for their work. The modules can be divided into ten pods (the Miami-Dade approach) offering a choice of staff development subjects. These pods might involve a commitment of six to ten hours for study, demonstrations and discussion. Based on expressed deficiencies, topics might include career education, curriculum development, instructional techniques, drafting of behavioral objectives, community college policy, goals and objectives, cooperative effort between the College and the area it serves anduse of learning resources. Staff may select those pods most beneficial and relevant to their needs. The workshops should be voluntary. After the first experience with them and after evaluation, it may be appropriate to offer in-house credit applicable to the point system for one module of work; one module might consist of three pods. These workshops lend themselves to various schedules; they might run on a day designated in the calendar for staff development.

Upgrading Technical Skills

The College should subsidize faculty who would benefit from institutes or short courses. Sources for such courses might include General Motors Training Centers, Bendix Corporation, Caterpillar Tractor Company and the Graphic Arts Technical Foundation. Travel funds are being utilized currently.

Apprenticeship Program

An apprenticeship program is recommended for the first semester of employment. A master instructor within the division would serve as a guide for new staff. He would observe and offer counsel on such matters as instructional technique and College policy. The program should be structured. Selection of master instructors would be based upon specific requirments. Functions of the master instructor would include classroom observation, review of course objectives and team teaching. It is further recommended that during the apprenticeship semester bi-weekly conferences be held and attended by the dean, division director, master instructors and new staff to assess improvement and share concerns.

Trustee Retreats

The trustee-administrator retreat should become an annual program. One area of concern as signified by the questionnaire responses is the trustee's concept of his role. In-service discussion on governance and representation should be included in future retreats. New trustees should be included in future retreats. New trustees should be introduced to the College through a series of pre-service activities.

Administrative Seminars

Seminars dealing specifically with management effectiveness and communications should be designed for administrative personnel. Such seminars should be prepared and led by consultants.

Upgrading Professional Credentials

Professional staff members who have not passed the trade competency examination should be encouraged to do so. Those staff members who require vocational certification must acquire the appropriate certification. Professional staff members lacking any degree should be encouraged to pursue the associate degree. It is further recommended that staff avail themselves of the sabbatical, after five years of service, to earn a baccalaureate degree.

Motivation for Improving Technical Skills

Credit should be allowed on the salary point system for training programs which do not carry academic credit value. Currently the contract allows points for credit courses only. Implications of this recommendation and the determination of point value should be jointly considered by management and faculty bargaining teams.

ORIENTATION

Orientation - New Staff

Formal pre-service programs for new staff have been scheduled on an annual basis. The major points of the program are:

1. Review philosophy and goals
2. Discuss student profiles
3. Review personnel policies
4. Review contractual matters
5. Tour the campus
6. Review support services
7. Explain faculty evaluation
8. Discuss college policy affecting academic concerns
9. Discuss evaluation techniques
10. Discuss policies affecting field trips, workshops, conferences
11. Review administrative responsibilities, function of Faculty Senate, committee structure
12. Discuss division concerns:
    a. instructional materials
    b. secretarial service
    c. syllabi
    d. curricular requirements
    e. special problems

Returning Staff

Convocations should be more closely structured. College philosophy, goals and academic policies should be reviewed. Divisions should meet to discuss goals for the year. In some cases, however, goals might be better set for programs, rather than for divisions.

Part-Time Staff

It is further recommended that part-time staff be involved in orientation programs.

Self Study

To facilitate pre-service activities, it is recommended that an audio-visual series be prepared offering presentations on special topics vital to orienting new staff. Such a series would permit greater flexibility in pre-service scheduling and would expedite pre-service for new staff hired while an academic year is in progress.

Appropriate topics can also be offered to part-time or substitute instructors. Some of these materials could result from the in-service programs prepared for faculty meetings.

RESEARCH, RENEWAL AND SELF DEVELOPMENT

Summer Research and Development Grants

The College will select interested and competent staff members to complete research and prepare materials related to instructional and/or curricular development. Interested faculty will apply and be selected based upon the merit of their proposals and the value to the College.

Reporting Professional Activities

To extend the benefits of attendance at off-campus professional meetings, it is recommended that participants report to their colleagues within the division. The report could become part of the agenda of division meetings.

Informal Discussion Groups

As a means of changing attitudes, strengthening self-realization and improving interpersonal communications, it is recommended that a group of representative staff meet with each other and/or outside professional facilitators to discuss topics related to instruction, curricular and internal ppograms; e.g., bridging the gap between career and academic faculties. Each member of this group might then lead a series of discussion groups on the same topics with other staff members. It is recommended that an objective third party is necessary in view of the sensitive nature of the problems for discussion.

Recreation/Renewal

It is recommended that there be wider use of College facilities for group and personal development activities. The physical education facilities and equipment might be made more available to staff.

Travel Opportunities

Travel experiences afford both educational and renewal opportunities. The College should study possibilities and arrange charter and package travel plans. These could be offered to the full College community, including all staff and students.

Professional Libraries

To answer, on a limited scale, the need for improvement of instructional skills and for upgrading of technical skills, it is recommended that copies of pertinent articles be routed and shared with others. These articles may be "discovered" by any member of the staff who can direct them to the appropriate division director. The director can circulate a copy among the appropriate faculty members, and maintain a copy within a file to become part of a professional library. A collection of books relevant to a specific discipline for use by instructors is also recommended for each division as well as instructional audio-visual materials.

Community College Consortium for Staff Development

The College will play an active role in initiating a staff development program for Pennsylvania community colleges.

Audio-Tutorial Materials Facilitators

Within each division, one or two instructors should gain sufficient ability to prepare an audio-tutorial program for the division. The materials would become part of a division learning laboratory and would employ the principles of competency-based instruction. The availability of these materials would permit greater efficiency in handling academic deficiencies and diversities of student ability resulting from the open door policy of admissions. The College should compensate these instructors for the preparation of each module. An approximate $150 per module might be a reasonable figure. Such a project should become a summer's activity in order to give the facilitators ample time.

Professional Audio Library

Individual faculty and staff attending conferences or workshops might tape keynote speeches or discussion sessions on topics of interest to colleagues. Commercially prepared materials can also be utilized for in-service programs or for self-improvement.

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Exchange for Development

As part of an ongoing staff development program and within limits of available resources, the Williamsport Area Community College strongly supports the establishment of a variety of faculty and administration exchange programs with educational institutions, government and business and industry within the state of Pennsylvania, the United States and with foreign countries. The program called

"Exchange for Development" aims to strengthen each institution by providing and sharing specific and appropriate expertise, training and operational models.

Professional Observations

Individuals or teams should be encouraged to visit model institutions to observe and review a special interest area.

Teacher Exchange

A program affording staff the opportunity to participate in an exchange program in either foreign schools or schools within the nation is recommended.

Employment of Interns

To permit the College to render service to those persons wishing to gain experience in the community college and at the same time to gain the benefit of fresh ideas and approaches, it is recommended that an internship program be instituted. Both teaching and administrative interns might be utilized.

CLASSIFIED STAFF

Orientation

To answer the need expressed in the questionnaires, it is recommended that new classified employees be prepared for their positions in two ways.

First, the new employees should be given literature, Staff Handbook, handouts or pamphlets explaining College policies concerning

among other items: insurance, sick days, vacations and retirement. They should be made aware of academic policies which would affect them. A secretary, for example, should understand College policies he/she would encounter in dealings with students; custodians should be aware of policy related to interrupting classes. These materials must be gathered and published.

Second, once a classified employee is hired, he/she should work, whenever possible, with the person he/she is replacing for at least one week. The employee would then gain first-hand orientation concerning specific duties and policies.

Job Descriptions/Evaluation Process

To answer the expressed need for more information regarding employment, job descriptions should be written for classified staff. Currently there is a deficiency in this area. Once such descriptions have been furnished, they would provide one base for performance evaluation. It is recommended that classified staff be involved in the preparation of this information. Subsequently, means of evaluating performance must be established.

Updating Skills

In-service workshops or mini-courses for secretaries and clerical staff should be offered to improve knowledge of format, office procedures, business machines and audio-visual equipment. These workshops could be conducted by members of the College professional staff.

This paper hopefully will stimulate your interest in staff development and assist those in the pursuit of such an end. Additionally, this writer would be remiss not to call your attention to the excellent work of Wallace (1975) who developed a reading titled "Community College Staff Development: An Annotated Bibliography," published by the Center for the Study of Higher Education, The Pennsylvania State University.

If additional information relevant to this presentation is desired, the questionaires referred to herein are available from the Williamsport Area Community College. If a more complete description is needed, it can be provided by ERIC at Ohio State University under the title of "Long Range Self Study 1975-1985...A Continuous Action Planning Process... The Williamsport Area Community College."

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